

Adolescent Employability Skills

Effectiveness of Independent Living Program in Preparing Youth for Employability Skills

Jane McIlvoy, Lisa McGlone, Wende Abernathy-Perkins, and Rhonda Roberts

This quantitative research study reviewed existing charts in the FIVCO & Big Sandy Regions (rural) and Jefferson County (urban) offices. The research included reviewing 30 charts from the FIVCO & Big Sandy Regions and 61 charts from the Jefferson County region independent living programs (ILP). The data collected provided a comparison of pre and post test scores, which contrasted the two regions to identify any consistencies or inconsistencies. This comparison will help determine that participants do report completing the program with an increase in employability knowledge. Data also shows that there is not always significant difference between rural and urban regions ILP effectiveness. Though the testing materials are identical, there appears to be a slightly more improvement in the rural area versus the urban. Overall, the research helps the researchers identify the effectiveness of the Chafee Independent Living Skills program in Kentucky.

Recommitment: Why Do Youth Recommit to the Independent Living Program?

This qualitative research included 7 face-to-face interviews with adults who have completed the Chafee Independent Living Program and recommitted to the state's custody upon "aging out." The participants were from the FIVCO Region of the Cabinet for Health and Human Services (CHFS) of Kentucky. The data generated provided an understanding of why youth over the age of 18 recommit to CHFS for additional training (college degrees, job skills & a place to live) and financial assistance.

An Overview of Employability and Recommitted Youth in Kentucky

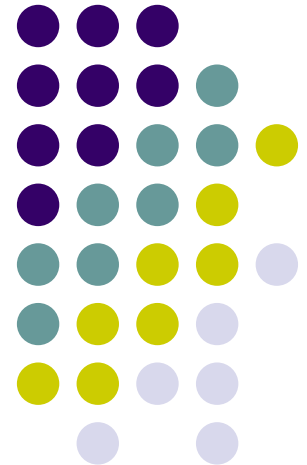
Researchers

Lisa McGlone

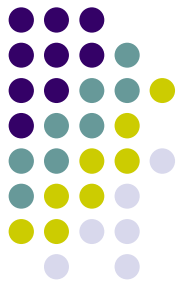
Rhonda Roberts

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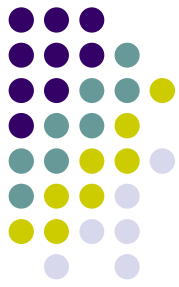


Employability & Recommitment in Kentucky



- Kentucky Chaffee Independent Living Program (ILP)
- Youth 15-18 years old committed to foster care and residential programs
- Participants in the “Life Skills” and employability skills course.
- Young adults recommitted to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.
- A focus on the employability section of the pre and post tests of the “Life Skills” program.

Quantitative Adolescent Employability Skills



Pre and Post Survey scores of committed youth (N=91) ages 15-18

Big Sandy (Pike, Floyd, Magoffin, Martin, and Johnson), FIVCO (Carter, Greenup, Elliot, Boyd, and Lawrence), and Jefferson County regions

Participants in the Cabinet for Health and Family Services Chafee Independent Living Program were **compared** to *determine if there is an increase in knowledge regarding specific employability skills taught during the life skills program*

Comparisons were made between pre and post test scores as well as Rural versus Urban (Big Sandy & FIVCO) regions

Research Tests



Variables:

1. Pre –test Obtaining Employability Skills
2. Post–test Obtaining Employability Skills
3. Pre-test Maintaining Employability
4. Post-test maintaining Employability Skills

Research Test:

Cronbach's Alpha Test of Reliability

Independent T-Test

Sample information:

Urban Region (N=61) =67%

Rural Region (N=30) = 33%

Analysis



Reliability Obtaining Employment

- Pre-Obtaining Employment – all questions were found to be reliable and Cronbach's alpha was .876. An Independent T-test showed that there was a significant difference between regions $T(89) = -2.240$, $p < .05$. The mean of the rural ($m = 34.233$, $sd = 7.25726$) is significantly different than that of urban ($m = 37.73$, $sd = 6.89420$) region.
- Post-Obtaining Employment: One question was found not as reliable and Cronbach's alpha was .695. An Independent t-test showed that there was no significant difference in scores between regions $T(89) = -1.486$, $p > .05$. The mean of the rural ($m = 40.1667$, $sd = 6.02342$) is significantly different than that of urban ($m = 43.1803$, $sd = 10.25428$) region.

Reliability Maintaining Employment

- Pre-Maintaining Employment questions – seven were not as reliable and Cronbach's alpha was .852. An Independent T-test showed that there was no significant difference in scores between regions $T(89) = .126$, $p > .05$. The mean of the rural ($m = 38.0333$, $sd = 11.82482$) is significantly different than that of urban ($m = 37.8033$, $sd = 5.60898$) region.
- Post maintain- Two questions was not as reliable and Cronbach's Alpha = .845. An Independent T-test showed that there was a significant difference in scores between regions $T(89) = -3.268$, $p < .05$. The mean of the rural ($m = 40.76$, $sd = 6.07813$) is significantly different than that of urban ($m = 44.9344$, $sd = 5.53735$) region.

Research Tests



Research Test:

Frequencies

Chi-Square Test of Independence

Mann-Whitney U Test

Wilcoxon Test

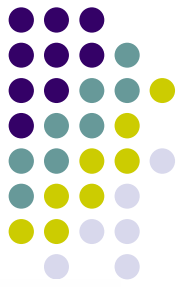
Sample information:

Urban Region (N=61) = 67%

Rural Region (N=30) = 33%

Presented Variables:

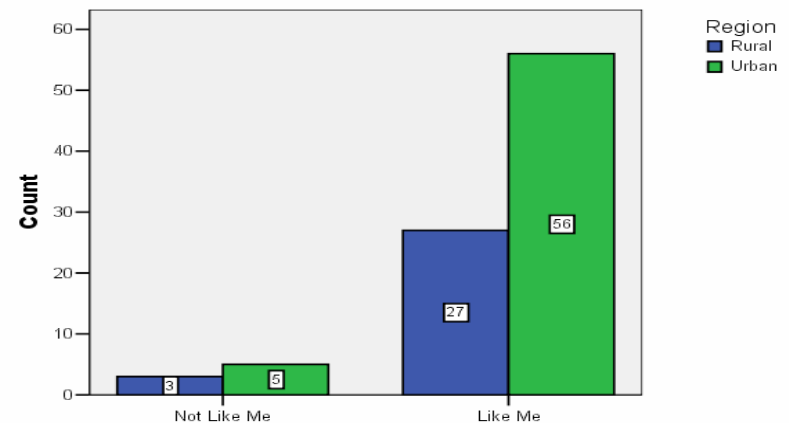
1. Pre and Post test: I am able to organize and lead group activities (like school or sports activities) (Ordinal)
2. Pre and Post test: I can name three ways to find out about job openings. (Ordinal)
3. Pre and Post test: I look over my work for mistakes. (Ordinal)
4. Pre and Post test: I use the library, newspaper, computer/internet, or other resources to get information. (Ordinal)
5. Rural and Urban: Region (Nominal)



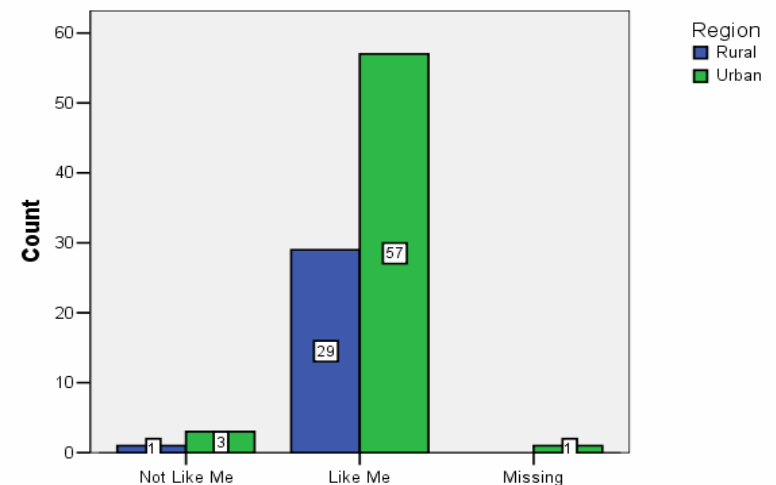
Q1. I can name three ways to find out about job openings.

- The test of frequencies indicated that overall there was a 3.3% increase in participants feeling they are able to name three ways to find employment.
- A chi-square test of independence compared the responses of rural and urban regions. There was not a significant difference between regions
 - * pre test: $\chi^2 = .082$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$
 - * post test $\chi^2 = .629$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$
- The chi-square test of independence did show a 6.7% increase in the rural and 1.6% increase in the urban regions response of "somewhat like me" regarding leading groups and activities after participating in the Independent Living Program.
- The Mann Whitney indicated that there was no sufficient differences between regions in pre & post test scores in organizations. Rural participants increase scores by 1.6% and Urban decreased by .79%.

Pre Test Naming 3 Ways to Find a Job



Post Test Name 3 Ways to Find a Job

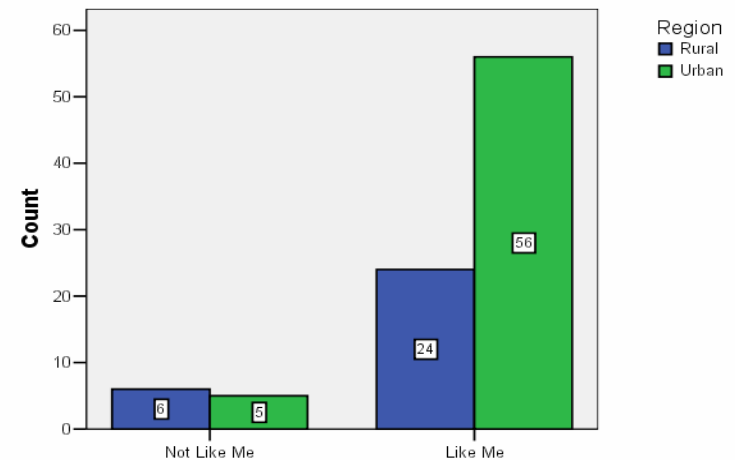


Q2.I am able to organize and lead group activities (like school or sports activates)

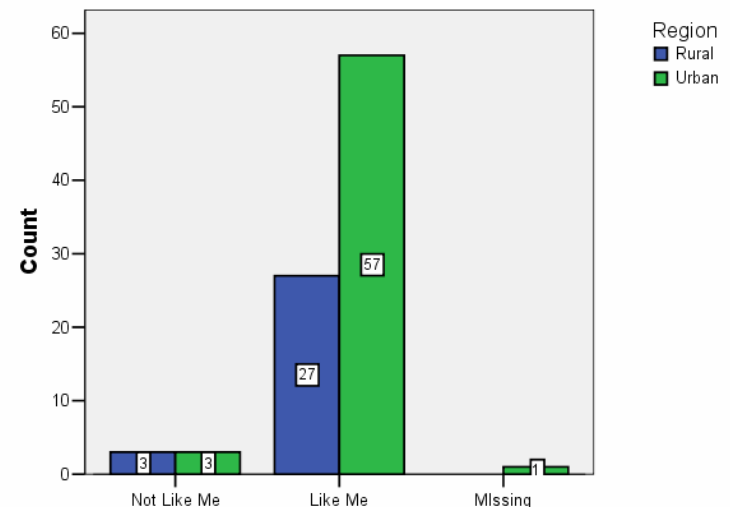


- 4.4% overall increase in participants feeling able to lead and organize group activities.
- A chi-square test of independence showed no significant difference between rural and urban regions:
 - pretest $\chi^2 = 2.636$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$
 - posttest $\chi^2 = 1.305$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$.
- The chi-square test of independence showed a 10% increase in the rural region and a 1.6% increase in the urban regions in “somewhat like me” response to leading groups and activities after participating in the Independent Living Program.
- Mann Whitney Test indicated that there was no significant differences between regions in pre & post test scores in organizations.
- Rural participants increase scores by 1.6% and Urban decreased by .79%.

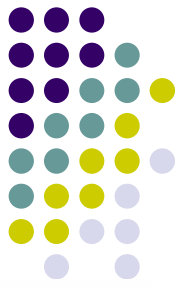
Pre-Test Ability to Organize and Lead Groups



Post Test Ability to Organize and Lead Groups

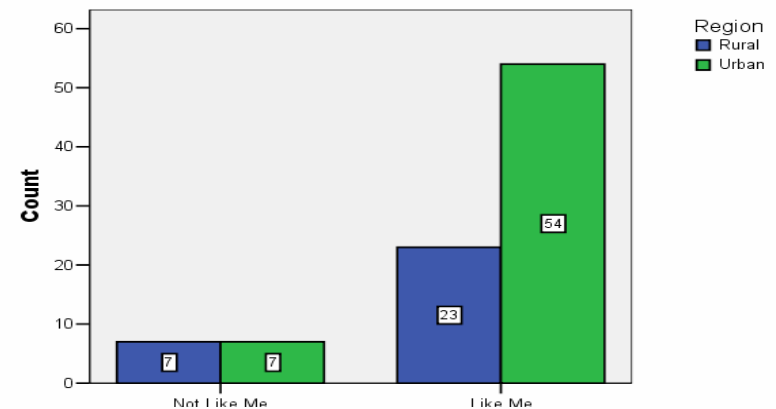


Q3. I look over my work for mistakes.

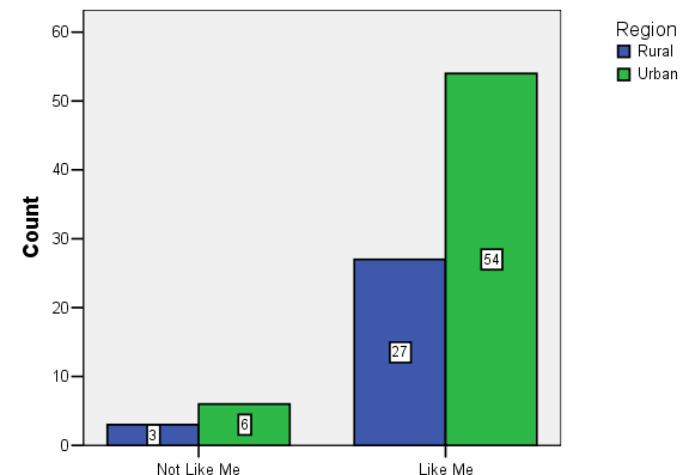


- 4.4% overall increase in the participants ability to look over their work for mistakes.
- A chi-square test of independence comparing the responses of rural and urban regions. There was not a significant difference between regions:
 - pretests $\chi^2 = .2.172$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$
 - posttests $\chi^2 = .000$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$
- The chi-square test of independence showed a 13.3% increase in the rural region and a 1.5% urban regions in the “somewhat like me” response to look over my work for mistakes after participating in the Independent Living Program.
- Mann-Whitney U test indicated that there is not a significant difference between regions pre & post scores. Rural participants scores increased by 1.62% and Urban decreased by 0.8%

Pre Test Looking Over Work



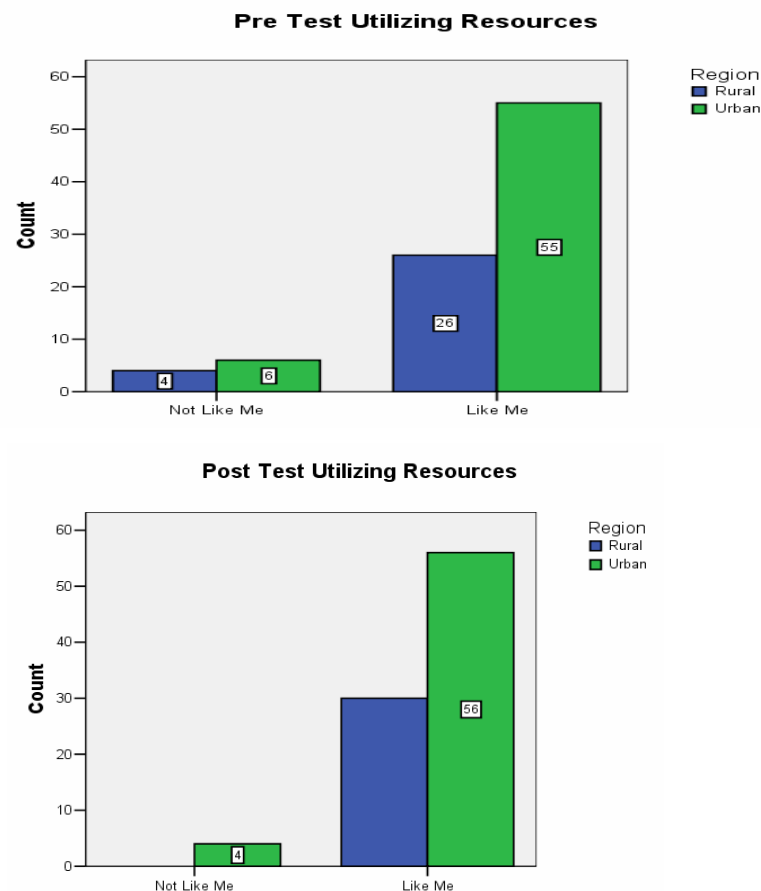
Post Test Looking Over Work

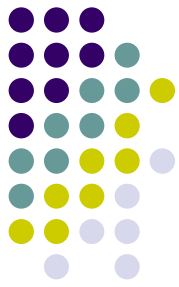


Q4. I use the library, newspaper, computer/internet, or other resources to get information



- 5.5% overall increase in participants ability to utilize resources to get information.
- A chi-square test of independence showed no significant difference between regions on pre tests
 - pretest : $\chi^2 = .251$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$
 - posttest: $\chi^2 = 1.305$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$
- The chi-square test of independence showed a 13.3% increase in the rural region and a 3.1% increase in the urban regions regarding participants response of “somewhat like me” to look over my work for mistakes after participating in the Independent Living Program.
- Mann-Whitney U test indicated that there was not a significant difference between regions in pre & post test outcomes. Rural participants increased in scores by 0.07% and Urban by 1.52%





Recommitment: Why Do Youth Recommit to the Independent Living Program?

- Seven *face-to-face* interviews were conducted with adults who completed the Chaffee Independent Living Program before “aging out” of the system
- The participants interviewed **recommitted** themselves to the state’s custody in order to build upon their life skills, continue their education, secure housing, and/or find a job.

Analysis



Analysis:

Tesch Method

Sample Population:

The population (N=7) is comprised youth that completed the Life Skills course, and recommitted to the Cabinet for Health and Families.

All participants interviewed are over the age of 18 and lived in the FIVCO or Big Sandy Regions of Kentucky at the time of recommitment.

Research Questions:

- Are you currently employed? If so, what is your occupation?
- How did Independent Living Courses encourage or influence you in your choice to recommit to State's Custody?
- Explain how Independent Living Courses prepared you and assisted you in obtaining employment.
- What are areas of the Independent Living Program employment section that were most beneficial to you?
- What areas of the Employment section of the Independent Living Program were least beneficial to you?
- What employment skills did you learn from the program that you now use in everyday life?
- Describe how these employment skills are beneficial to you.

Themes



Theme 1:

Current Occupational Exploration

1. *Working*
 - *25-45 hours per week*
2. *School*
 - *Technical College*
 - *Cake Decorating Classes*
 - *12-14 hours per semester*
3. *Unique outcomes*
 - *Work part-time and go to school*
 - *Respondents did not identify areas of improvement.*
 - *One of the potential interviewee's was in jail at the time of the interviews*

Theme 2:

Choice of Recommitment

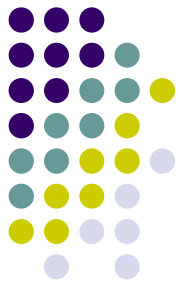
1. *Independence*
 - *ILP classes influenced some, but other benefits were the primary influence*
 - *Housing provided*
 - *Assistance with school*
 - *Support system*

Quotes of Participants

“I am currently employed as a Social Service Worker II with the Cabinet for Health and Families. I provide services to families, children who are dependent, neglected, and abused. I supervise visits, transport kids, and ensure the needs of children are being met”.

“I did not want to be the typical foster child. My own incentive to be different, and successful, as well as my foster parents and support system were more of an influence to me than the actual classes.”

“I have a child of my own, so housing was a big influence. The foster parents are a big support to me and help me with the baby, and by me extending my commitment I can still live in the foster home”.



Themes

Theme 3:

Skills to Obtaining and Maintain Employment

1. Interviewing

“We practiced doing resumes, letters, how to dress”.

2. Budgeting

“Budgeting helps me in everyday life”.

Theme 4:

Conflict Resolution

“Taking orders from others, compromising, and respecting others, without these things I don’t think I could get anywhere in life. I would constantly be in chaos without these things”.

Theme 5:

Least Beneficial Skills

* Cultural background

“I don’t think cultural background has anything to do with employment”.

Conclusions



After comparing the pre and post test responses (N=91), a subset of the general population of the Chaffee Independent Living Program in Kentucky, *it is determined that there did not appear to be a significant differences between the rural and urban regions regarding the amount of information retained through the “Life Skills” courses.*

It is determined that it would be beneficial to review the “Life Skills” course *pre and post test survey’s on an annual basis* to demonstrate areas of improvement, as well as strengths of the program.

In analyzing the data for qualitative study, **independence is consistently the theme for the participants**; therefore, for the Independent Living Program participants to be successful in their independence promotion of recommitment by the foster parents and social workers **would help reinforce the participation in the supportive services that endorse continued education and job stability.**

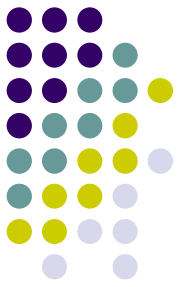
The data shows that participants want foster parents to participate in teaching students skills such as cultural sensitivity, budgeting and interviewing.

Respondents feel this will help youth become more independent and successful as they begin to associate their learned skills with reality.

Strengths & Weaknesses



- Good response rate
- Validated instrument
- Good representation of the KY regions, etc
- Interview participants were cooperative
- Small sample size
- Lack of demographic information
- Short time frame
- Not a lot of previous research
- Not all ILP had up to date data
- Interview availability



Implication of the Study

The data of the current research can be replicated for future use by Independent Living Coordinators across the state to improve the quality of skills received by youth enrolled in Life Skills” courses. Based on the fact that very limited research has been performed on this program, results of this research may improve the quality of ILP programs across the state.

“It is finished!”

